



MINISTERIOS

LUZ A LAS NACIONES

THE LIFE OF THE FAITHFUL

DISCIPLESHIP LEVEL 2

LUZ A LAS NACIONES CHRISTIAN CHURCH



VISION

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SALVATION

The Sin of Man

Sin does not come from one person in particular but rather from the whole of the human race. We human beings are all sinners and therefore cannot approach or have any kind of relation to God.

ROMANS 3:23: "...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

However, why is the human race sinful?

When God created man, he created a holy being, a being that was pleasing to God and even immortal. However, sin enters the picture when man decides to disobey God.

GENESIS 2:17: "But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die."

GENESIS 3:17: "To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate fruit from the tree about which I commanded you, "You must not eat from it." Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat food from it all the days of your life.'"

So, what happened to the human race when Adam decided to disobey God?

ROMANS 5:12: "Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned...."

Now, sin is not the bad things that we do, but rather what we inherit, and is a part of who we are.

David wrote in **PSALM 51:5:** "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

We understand that we are sinners. What shall happen to man? Or rather, what are the wages that we have to pay for being sinners?

ROMANS 6:23: "For the WAGES of sin is death."

JOHN 5:29: "...those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."

REVELATION 21:8: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

REVELATION 21:27: "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are WRITTEN in the Lamb's book of life."

So, what shall we do?

This would be the great question that we must ask ourselves: What shall we do? What hope do we have as human beings if what is most just for us is to be condemned for our sins? By law, we must pay for our guilt, but there is another option: for someone else to pay for us. This is called substitution, so that someone else takes the place of my punishment and pays as I should pay.

JESUS TOOK OUR PLACE OF PUNISHMENT

2 CORINTHIANS 5:21: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

When Jesus, the Son of God, was here on earth, he was Holy, Just, innocent and without sin. But in spite of this, God made him to be sin; he dealt with him and unleashed his wrath upon Jesus as though he had committed every sin of every person who would believe in him. As holy as Jesus is, God treats him as he would treat you and me. God punishes Jesus as though he were you or me. Jesus changed places with us, and when God comes back to us, he sees us as Holy and Innocent; we receive total forgiveness. When God sees the Cross, he sees you, and when he sees you, he sees Christ.

So, then, after this beautiful declaration, we could summarize this great sacrifice by using two words:

GOD GAVE US HIS FORGIVENESS

EPHESIANS 1:7: "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."

GOD GAVE US SALVATION

JOHN 3:16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

When we accept Christ, we may say most freely that **WE ARE SAVED**: saved from the wrath of God, saved from eternal condemnation, saved from hell, saved from punishment through the grace of Jesus, who died for us. But as long as man refuses to believe in Jesus, he shall not be saved.

So, as we said at the beginning, there is no kind of relation between God and man because of sin; because of sin, man may not get to approach God. What happens now that I have accepted the Lord Jesus Christ and been forgiven by God?

NOW WE ARE HIS CHILDREN!

JOHN 1:12-13: "Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God — children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God."

CONCLUSION:

Now we are forgiven, saved and, above all, **CHILDREN OF GOD**. This is the greatest title that we simple mortals can have: **CHILDREN OF GOD**. Hallelujah, glory be to God. Blessings to God and the Lord Jesus Christ for his great sacrifice and for the forgiveness of our sins.

RESTRUCTURE YOUR LIFE

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

Receiving Jesus as Lord and Savior is renewal, the way to be reborn for eternal life. This means leaving behind one's past, the life of sin that one may have led, and starting to lead the life that Jesus desires of you. A life of peace, love, joy, integrity and saintliness.

We shall mention below some of the areas that must be restructured.

SEXUAL LIFE (GALATIANS 5:16,19):

- a) If you are in union with a partner without having been married, ask the Lord for forgiveness and marry.
- b) If you are fornicating (having intercourse before marrying), ask the Lord for forgiveness, repent and marry.
- c) If you are committing adultery (having intercourse with a married person, or having intercourse with someone if you are married), ask the Lord for forgiveness, repent and end that relationship.
- d) If you have problems with deviant sexual behavior, (homosexuality, lesbianism, cross-dressing, pornography, etc.), ask the Lord for forgiveness, repent and seek help from the Pastor.

Debt

In the time in which we live, it is very easy to get the idea of having access to easy money that may lead us to have debt and worry.

Having communion with the Lord and living under his principles allows us to be good stewards, fulfill commitments and obligations and live in peace.

EXODUS 20: 15: "You shall not steal."

ROMANS 13:7-8: "Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor. Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law."

EPHESIANS 4:28: "Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need."

1 TIMOTHY 6:10: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs."

PROVERBS 28:20: "A faithful person will be richly blessed, but one eager to get rich will not go unpunished."

HABITS:

In regard to vices, games of chance, veneration of idols, the practice of false religions, witchcraft, sorcery, divination, etc. ...

COLOSSIANS 3:5-10: "Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming. You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived. But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator."

REVELATION 21:8: "But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

DEUTERONOMY 22:5: "A woman must not wear men's clothing, nor a man wear women's clothing, for the Lord your God detests anyone who does this."

1 CORINTHIANS 11:14-15: "Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering."

FRIENDSHIPS

Christians must separate from every friendship having negative influences over their spiritual lives.

2 CORINTHIANS 6:14-15: "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?"

JEREMIAH 15:19: "Therefore this is what the Lord says: 'If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.'"

JOHN 15:18-19: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you."

RESENTMENTS

JOHN 13:34-35: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

ROMANS 12:18: "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone."

HEBREWS 12:14: "Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord."

If you have doubts about your life, approach your Pastor and seek advice about your situation in order to fix it as soon as possible. Perhaps you need ministering. He shall instruct you on the proper thing to do.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE BAPTIZED IN WATER?

It means to die to the world and to sin, and to be reborn into eternal life in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 6:4-6: "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly also be united with him in a resurrection like his. For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin...."

WHY ARE WE BAPTIZED?

1. Jesus set the example for us.

MARK 1:9: "At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan."

2. It is an order from Jesus.

MATTHEW 28:19: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...."

3. The Apostles baptized.

ACTS 2:41: "Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day."

TWO FORMS OF BAPTISM IN WATER.

Immersion

MATTHEW 3: 16: "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water...."

Aspersión

This is to sprinkle drops of water upon someone's head; it is practiced in cases in which the person cannot be submerged in water or is not mobile.

Is Baptism in water required for salvation?

No, the only requirement for being saved is to receive Jesus as Lord and Savior, but baptism is a part of salvation because a true child of God must testify to the new life having been received.

MARK 16:16: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned."

LUKE 23:42-43: "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

LEARN TO PRAY



1. What is praying?

It is talking to God. It is communicating with him as we talk to a friend, a family member or any loved one. We talk to him because he lives and is with us.

2. Why pray?

MATTHEW 26:41: "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

JOHN 15:4: "Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me."

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

JOHN 16:24: "Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."

3. The order to pray is:

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17: "... pray continually...."

EPHESIANS 6:18: "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."

4. The way to pray

In secret

Forgiving if you have something against someone

In humility

Addressing the Father

5. Guide to praying

MATTHEW 6:9-13: This, then, is how you should pray

"Praise and devotion: 'Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name....'"

Asking His will "'...your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.'"

Asking for what we need. "'Give us today our daily bread.'"

Asking for forgiveness "'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.'"

"Asking for his care. 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'"

Praise“For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

JOHN 16:23: “Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name.”

Amen. “So be it.”

FASTING

Biblical text: **MARK 2:18-20**

"Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, 'How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?' Jesus answered, 'How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.'"

Objective: To see the importance of fasting and the need to fast in our churches.

Introduction: When we began in the life of the Holy Spirit, there came the revelation from God that we would have to fast in order to encourage his presence and his devotion. We obeyed without knowing why because, really, fasting is a mystery: What does withstanding hunger have to do with seeing the works of God? But later we understood that fasting is denying the body of appetites in order to feed the spirit, and that the spirit, more in harmony with the Holy Spirit, may see the works of God more easily.

Definition: Fasting is abstaining from taking in nourishment, partly or totally, for a certain period of time in order to see the works of God.

I. KINDS OF FASTING:

- A. Partial — **DANIEL 10:3**: "I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." Partial fasting can be abstaining from one or two meals during the day, and drinking water.
- B. Total — This means not eating or drinking anything during a certain time. **JONAH 3:7-9**: "This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh: 'By the decree of the king and his nobles: Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.'"

II DURATION:

- A. One day, **1 SAMUEL 7:6**: "When they had assembled at Mizpah, they drew water and poured it out before the Lord. ON THAT DAY THEY FASTED and there they confessed, 'We have sinned against the Lord.'"
- B. Three days, **ACTS 9:9**: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything." Saul of Tarsus, upon coming face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, decided to enter into fasting, which came to last three days. He said: "I was wrong. Now I shall not eat or drink until I see how all this ends." After three days, the disciple Ananias appeared, and Saul ended his fasting and became the Apostle Paul.
- C. Seven days. We can find no biblical text to sustain this thesis.

D. Twenty-one days. **DANIEL 10:3**: "I ate no choice food; no meat or wine touched my lips; and I used no lotions at all until the three weeks were over." In a fasting that goes longer than three days, we must drink water at least. But three days come very easily without eating anything or drinking water.

Forty days. Like Moses in **EXODUS 34:28**: "Moses was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights without eating bread or drinking water. And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant — the Ten Commandments." Or in the case of the Lord Jesus Christ in **LUKE 4:1-2**: "Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry."

III EFFECTS OF FASTING.

A. Intervention from God in a difficult case.

1. Jehoshaphat in **2 CHRONICLES 20:1-2, 12-13, 22**: "After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war against Jehoshaphat. Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, 'A vast army is coming against you from Edom from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar (that is, En Gedi).'"

"Our God, will you not judge them? For we have no power to face this vast army that is attacking us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.' All the men of Judah, with their wives and children and little ones, stood there before the Lord."

"As they began to sing and praise, the LORD set ambushes against the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir who were invading Judah, and they were defeated."

2. Esther and the people of Israel. **ESTHER 4:16**: "'Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.'" From this came the freeing of all Jews.

B. Freeing from demons. **MATTHEW 17:19-21**: "Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, 'Why couldn't we drive it out?' He replied, 'Because you have so little faith. Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you. BUT THIS KIND DOES NOT GO OUT EXCEPT BY PRAYER AND FASTING.'"

C. Health of the body. **ACTS 9:9, 18**: "For three days he was blind, and did not eat or drink anything."

"Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized...."

D. For direction from God. **ACTS 13:2**: "While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, 'Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.'"

ACTS 14:23: "Paul and Barnabas appointed elders for them in each church and, with prayer and fasting, committed them to the Lord, in whom they had put their trust."

IV. THE ATTITUDE FOR FASTING

MATTHEW 6:17-18: "But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."

ISAIAH 58:3-7: "'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humble ourselves, and you have not noticed?'"

"Yet on the day of your fasting, you do as you please and exploit all your workers. Your fasting ends in quarreling and strife, and in striking each other with wicked fists. You cannot fast as you do today and expect your voice to be heard on high. Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for people to humble themselves? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying in sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

"Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?"

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Biblical text: **1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-28**

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup."

Objective: To understand this doctrine in order to participate in the Lord's Supper with joy and reverence.

Introduction: A Nicaraguan Catholic priest ordained in Mexico tells us how he was converted to the Gospel. He was a parish priest at a church in Mexico City and stored the hosts in a glass cabinet. But one time, somehow a mouse got inside and ate a good number of the hosts. When he opened the cabinet in the morning, the mouse jumped out, and he could see the hosts eaten by the little creature. He started to think: My God can't be eaten by a mouse, and he made sure that the nuns didn't find out about the incident. Some days later, he went to see another priest who was a friend of his at another parish in the city and said to him: Father, may I ask you a question? And the other one said to him: Yes, of course. And so he asked him: "Tell me, do you believe in the Eucharist?" And the other said to him: "I shall tell you the truth: I don't believe in the Eucharist, but that's what I live on." This began the process of reflection that led him to become an Evangelical preacher. The Eucharist is the Catholic doctrine that the host is the true Body of Christ and the wine in his true blood, and that during mass when the priest raises his hand to bless the elements, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes his blood.

MEANING OF SACRAMENT From the theology of L. Berkhof, page 617, we take the following definition of "sacrament": "A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by sensible signs the grace of God in Christ, and the benefits of the covenant of grace, are represented, sealed, and applied to believers, and these, in turn, give expression to their faith and allegiance to God." We understand that there are only two sacraments for the Christian: baptism in water and the Lord's Supper.

II. THREE INTERPRETATIONS

A Transubstantiation. The Roman Catholic Church has an interpretation called transubstantiation, which means that when the priest raises his hand to bless the bread and wine, these are literally converted into the body, blood and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The priest then offers in sacrifice the Body of Christ. This interpretation is first and foremost illogical because the bread remains bread

and the wine remains wine. To this, the Roman Catholic answers that this is a dogma, that “even though it resembles bread it is not bread, but rather flesh, and even though it may resemble wine it is not wine, but rather blood, because that is what the Church affirms.” On the other hand, it is contrary to the Book of Hebrews, which affirms that there was one sacrifice made by Christ, which cannot be repeated. **HEBREWS 10:10-14**: “And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool. For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.” They are grounded in Christ saying: “This IS my body.”

B. **Consubstantiation**. This is the doctrine of Martin Luther, who said that bread is bread, and is the body of Christ at the same time, and that wine is wine, and is the blood of Christ at the same time. Martin Luther based this doctrine on the words of Christ cited by the Roman Catholic: “This IS my body.”

C. **Symbolism**. This is the doctrine of the reformer John Calvin, which has the Evangelical interpretation: Bread symbolizes the body of Christ, and wine symbolizes the blood of Christ. The words, “This IS my body” are symbols, just as when Christ says, “I am the door” or “I am the way,” etc. He is not a door, but rather symbolizes a door, and he is not a way, but rather symbolizes a way.

III. SIGNIFIERS OF THE LORD’S SUPPER We turn once more to the theology of L. Berkhof, from which we take four signifiers of the Lord’s Supper, which are on pages 649 and 650:

A. A symbolic representation of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. **1 CORINTHIANS 11:26**: “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”

B. The participation of the faithful in the crucified Christ. At the Lord’s Supper, the participants receive and feed upon symbols – that is, symbolically speaking, they “eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood.” – **JOHN 6:53**.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Very truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.’”

C. The death of Christ as the object of faith, and the effect of this act as giving life, strength and joy to the soul. Just as bread and wine nourish and invigorate the bodily life of man, so does Christ sustain and quicken the life of the soul.

D. The union of the faithful among one another. As members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, constituting a spiritual unity, they eat of the same bread and drink of the same wine. **1 CORINTHIANS 10:17**: “Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf.”

IV. SPIRITUAL STATE FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE LORD’S SUPPER

1 CORINTHIANS 11:28-32: “Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such

judgment. Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.” And here it is useful to note: Who may participate in



the Lord's Supper? We believe only baptized Christians taking as an example that the Lord Jesus Christ did not give the Lord's Supper to the multitudes, nor to the 120 or the 70, but rather to the 12 Apostles – that is to say, those who were definitely committed to Him. The Christian who has not been baptized in water must not participate in the Lord's Supper because baptism in water comes to be an act of consecration and definition with the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Lord's Supper is for those who are committed to Him.

JESUS CHRIST MINISTERING THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Lord Jesus Christ taught that when he comes with his Church to celebrate his millennial kingdom, the first thing he shall do is celebrate the Lord's Supper and give it to his people. As He says in **MATTHEW 26:29**: "I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." There is an Evangelical denomination, the "Friends" Church, which instructs not to participate in the Lord's Supper, and generally when they find themselves at a gathering where the Lord's Supper is being shared, they refrain and do not participate. But what shall they do when the Lord Jesus Christ himself is giving the Lord's Supper to his people. Will they say to him: "Lord, we are not participating because we are Friends"?

FRIENDSHIP, COMMITMENT AND MARRIAGE

"THE LORD GOD SAID, 'IT IS NOT GOOD FOR THE MAN TO BE ALONE. I WILL MAKE A HELPER SUITABLE FOR HIM.'" (GEN. 2: 18).

God saw that it was not good for man to be alone. So he decided to make him a suitable helper. Such a relationship in God does not happen overnight, but rather must be the product of the nurturing of an honest friendship between siblings, which leads them to a formal commitment ending in marital union.

1. The Special (Boy) Friend-Special (Girl) Friend Meeting:

This is the first step towards the special friendship between young men and women of the congregation, within **its own husband-wife meeting plan**, a pursuit in which the parents, chiefly, and later pastors must guide our own children. It must teach youths to esteem their hearts, not to mislead themselves out of measure with any other youth, to esteem themselves as children of God, living temples of God, deserving of the happiness within marriage.

In order to search for the special (boy or girl) friend, we must guide ourselves by the following characteristics:

1.1 It must be a believer in Christ Jesus. **2 COR. 6: 14-16:** Because there is nothing that a Christian has in common with an unbeliever. Rather, this may be a tool and a reason for the Christian to fall.

1.2 Affinity of Spirits: It would be ideal to come from the same congregation (it is not imperative), so that there is an affinity of spirits with which both follow the Lord, his commandments and doctrine.

1.3 Affinity of Souls: Correlation with regard to each person's self: temperament, character, tastes, demeanor.

1.4 Similarity in Ages: One must search for parity and accordance in ages, so that the vitality and subsequent decline may be parallel.

At all times, youths' souls must be subject to their spirit in order to avoid encounters of the flesh, which bring about carnal fruits.

The first and best friendship that a youth must nurture is with Christ Jesus.

Youths should get to know each other as siblings and friends, sharing (in God) for a certain time (2-3 years at the most), from which there develops a special friendship.

2. The Development of the Special Friendship:

Special friendship is achieved after nurturing friendship between siblings. It does not begin with a "declaration" or "acceptance" establishing a "pact" or "commitment" between friends. The friendship at no time represents commitment; at no time are the youths "engaged."

They are only “friends” nurturing a friendship, in such a way as to allow them to get to know each other by the characteristics of their souls, a relationship that as it develops may lead to preference for each other out of all the other siblings, to the point of mutually deciding to commit to each other.

At this moment they will have truly achieved a special friendship: This is the loving man finding the darling woman, who is for him like “a lily among thorns” (**SONG OF SONGS 2:2**), and the darling woman keeping herself there. (They have interacted with each other and grown fond of each other, but they both stay in their own place.)

2.1 A preference is developed for each other; they treat each other as friends in order to see if the friendship may come to be something special. They have no commitment; they are not engaged; neither the brother is man or the sister is wife. They must respect their primary and abiding family commitments. They have nothing to cut off because there is nothing.

2.2 In friendship, one seeks to know: the love of the man for the Lord, tastes, feelings, aspirations, if the man has “spiritual values” and the woman has “spiritual values” of virtue, the order followed within the family, if they are subject to their parents – important in both cases – and especially their virtues and defects. To pay attention when their souls become kindred; they may easily make mistakes if it is not their spirit that is in control.

2.3 At this stage, our doctrine does not abide bodily manifestations of “love”: touching of hands, “lovers” embraces, kisses on the lips.

2.4 They must avoid being alone in secluded places, being alone in parents’ houses, staying out all night or riding alone for a long time in cars. There is no need to foster temptation. They must avoid the conditions that may facilitate falls of the flesh. Behavior as a couple must be in public places.

2.5 **Special friendship is not commitment** nor does it create responsibilities between siblings. It is simply a friendly relationship, which should lead to a preference between siblings thinking of the ideal couple. (Take heart, if there is no connection, it is not the end of the world. Surely, our best friend, Christ Jesus, is avoiding years of unnecessary suffering within a possible marriage that He does not abide.) The friendship comes to be so special that the brother has now seen his darling and wants her for his wife, and the sister has seen her beloved and wants to receive him as her husband. Then comes the premarital commitment, under which the following conditions must be reviewed:

A. HEALTHY FRUITS: FEAR OF GOD, MATURITY, RESPONSIBILITY, SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE, ADHERENCE OF THE SOUL TO THE SPIRIT, COMMUNION, UNDERSTANDING OF DEFECTS, ESTEEM FOR VIRTUES, TRULY SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP, AWARENESS OF ALL FUTURE COMMITMENTS TO BE FULFILLED ON BOTH PARTS AND FREELY AGREEING TO FULFILL THEM.

B. Joy, eagerness or mutual desire to “get married” – to live in the same house: After proving “an understanding of each other in love” without finding fault in defects, imperfections or unpleasant experiences from the past.

C. Financial stability for the husband or jointly in order to sustain a home and feed children. (House, stable job, minimum sufficient income.) **GEN. 2:19-22:** Adam first had work to do, then he received from God his lady.

E. Confirmation from the parents and the pastors.

3. Commitment:

This is not the result of play between two young people without a definition of its own, concrete goals or even the concept of marriage. It is the result of a truly special friendship that is nurtured and developed, leading the special friends to the surety of being fully capable (spiritually, financially, humanly) of forming a marriage that is pleasing to God. When the special friends establish their marriage commitment, their true courtship begins, with Christ and his Church as a firm marital promise. As a special characteristic, the man places the engagement ring on his betrothed finger.

The marriage commitment is recognized by presenting the youths publicly to the congregation. By this time, both are sure that they want to marry each other, which is why they set a wedding date with a sensible timeframe of at least six months. Characteristics of this stage are:

3.1 A certain liberty in mutual expression is permitted. The man has made a sign that the young woman takes him as her betrothed: kisses on the lips, embraces, holding of hands. (They are still not man and wife.) If the Spirit testifies to carnal excitations, they should be avoided. The ideal would be to abstain from this still.

3.2 They carry out their preparations and purchase property, domestic necessities and other items.

4.- Marriage

This is the happy fulfillment of the loving man's promise that the darling woman has been waiting for. Following a blessing from God upon the youths' marriage, the free will of mutual union must be expressed by those marrying, through the performance of a civil marriage ceremony: this union recognized by the Lord.

The marriage must not be a contract for separate ownership of property. It is the true fulfillment of the Word of God, for which the man leaves his mother and father and joins together with his wife, thus constituting one sole flesh (**GEN. 2:24; EPH. 5:31-32**), at the time of joining together in intimacy.

The marital blessing is at no time an empty ritual exhibition or something "to be done." It is an act through which, by ministry of the congregation, God blesses the marital union, with the support of the congregation, which rejoices and celebrates in the Lord the establishment of a new Eden.